

Dead Bulbs

the problem is universal:
 what to do with dead litebulbs;
 with old-young athletes
 once the lime-lite drains from their eyes;
 with buckskin frontier marshalls
 once the town sprouts sidewalks and sunday schools.

the litebulbs gone dead
 could be smashed in a million bits
 in a thousand rooming-house corridors
 to refract and augment the lighting there
 (or put them out for the garbagemen
 to salvage for their copper)

all else failing
 bury them in the garden, side by side
 with the athletes in ancient overcoats
 with the frontier marshalls gone bitter
 on diets of christian temperance and gratitude

and wait for spring
 for the sun like history
 to resurrect the deeds of the earth
 (the athlete's clever hands
 the gunsight pupils of the buckskin gun)
 to bloom and blind the world again

as in the easy muscle beneath the skin
 or two figures turning darkly in the brilliance
 of tennis courts or a western stagecoach town

so we do with litebulbs
 when they're done
 so we plant old heroes in the ground

and wait for spring
 to riddle us with sunlight.

— *Brian Purdy*